FACULTY OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE

MASTER THESIS:

Teaching Culture and creating a sensitive environment in EFL classes in “Aleksander Xhuvani” High School – Podujeve

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ABSTRACT

Being able to create a sensitive environment is becoming a real challenge and it is emerging among our school students and teachers.

Teacher’s ability to create such an environment it is of great importance in our modern world. I was very confident and carefully have chosen my Master Thesis topic, and I am fully aware that it needs a deep analysis and thorough research. From my experience as an English Teacher for more than 25 years I’ve noticed lack of responsibility, or no responsibility at all, toward cultural issues.

I hope that after I conduct the research, findings will be useful for English Language Teachers and help them toward better understanding of cultural values. As described above in one form or another culture has always been included in the foreign language curriculum. What seems still to be debatable is how it should be taught, what the culture syllabus should contain ,what would be the most appropriate methodology and, finally, what teaching materials to use .The first part of the theses tries to find answer to these question.

The thesis falls into the following parts; introduction, two chapters and conclusion.

The introduction summarizes the importance of culture teaching in foreign language education. It also gives a brief history of culture teaching, offers some definitions of culture and, lastly, explains some most important terms. The chapter concentrates on the following aspects

- goals and principles of teaching culture;
- defining a cultural syllabus
- materials for teaching culture
- ways of teaching culture

The classroom and the teaching culture environment should do as much as possible to faster cooperation, acceptance and learning. The teachers aim should be exactly the establishing of such an environment that is favorable for helping all students with or without abilities encourage emotional well-being create an atmosphere for emotional and learning development. A warm classroom environment can lead increased achievement and a sense of belonging at school.

Knowing of student's characteristics such as readiness, interests and learning styles and teaching culture based on them are important issues that will be explained later in this paper. This
paper focuses on description of teaching and culture searching sensitive environment in classes and their affects will help teachers to plan and create a classroom that welcomes and support all students as well as increasing their skills and learning. The conclusion draws together the most important aspects of both chapters.

The thesis also has 10 appendices, which include the questionnaires used in the empirical study as well as examples of some teaching techniques and other materials related to the teaching of culture. The thesis is based on 105 sources.

**Key words:** teachers, culture, students, teaching, environment, learning, classroom, examples, questionnaire, techniques, materials, books.
CHAPTER V- CONCLUSION

It is very important part of the EFL knowing culture of target language. It is very well known that language and culture cannot be separated because culture not only indicates who is talking to who, what are they talking about, how communication goes on, but also it helps to determine how people encode and receive different messages, the meaning, conditions and circumstances that these messages have been sent and received. In other words teaching of foreign language should include various ideas about the social behavior, traditions, rules and costumes of target language. It is certain that English speaking competence is a compound skill that needs continuous development, and this development can occur when students reflect on the process of speaking and practice verbally without the threat of evaluation. It can be stated that the results of the research showed a real state of anxiety during English speaking of students in the respective school, how teachers treat their students, and how much do they do to make students feel comfortable while they learn and speak English as well as how much they make efforts to be an example of spontaneously speaking English. By focusing on the process of speaking the English language, students/participants of the survey attained a useful device to raise their English speaking ability. The results of the questionnaires show that speaking is foundational in learning the English language.

Teaching culture may not need particular treatment but it does demand the careful attitude of the language teachers in order to understand and to effectively identify this phenomenon in the student’s English foreign language speaking skills. It is also important to apply the new interactive methodology of student-centered learning, where they conduct combined activities involving teachers and students rather than the traditional method of teacher-centered learning, where they constantly repeat the learning tasks like machines.

The research conducted through students’ questionnaires and teacher’s interviews was an effort to realize the factual nature of the phenomenon from different perspectives.

All research participants/students agreed that they feel nervous while speaking English in front of others. Every factor or situation that increases the chances of exposing the student’s deficiencies and language imperfections in front of others is expected to cause teaching culture for students while speaking English. This situation might be group work or class environment that would challenge a student’s communicative abilities.
The research findings presented that the feelings of culture become more threatening when the language teacher’s method of correcting mistakes of the students is inflexible and humiliating for the students.

The research concludes that the important causes of culture in learning English speaking skills among the students of the high school “Aleksander Xhuvani” are: the firm, uncomfortable and embarrassing attitude of the teachers towards students, mostly when they make mistakes; classroom environment where the students view the classroom as a place where their mistakes are noticed and their shortcomings are pointed out; teaching foreign language in front of the whole class or in public, even in their native language; lack of confidence and therefore motivation in their ability to learn English; fear of making mistakes and fear of losing face for not being perfect and, conditioning in childhood to believe that English is an extremely teaching culture to learn. Due to the importance of the English language for advancement in education and in society, teachers must press students to accomplish their potential and produce results beyond their ability.

In sum, to make culture teaching on integral part of a language class, the teacher should set clear and realistic goals. Although all aspects (cognitive, behavioral, and affective) are important, most scholars stress that the main goals of teaching culture should be developing intercultural understanding and communication. To achieve the goals teacher should consider an appropriate approach as well as suitable techniques and activities for teaching culture. The choice of the latter depends on several factors, such as the situations in which the language is taught, the age and language levels of learners and, lastly, the teacher and his/her preparation to teach culture.

Teachers also need accessible and reliable sources for teaching culture. Several studies have shown that the cultural dimension in textbooks varies to a great extent. In order to evaluate their cultural content teachers can use various checklists. However, in order to provide learners with up-to-date information teachers should also turn to other sources.

The aim of the present research is to get an insight into the situation of culture teaching in English classes in Podujeva's high schools. In order to get a better view both teachers and students' opinions of various aspects of teaching/learning culture were studied.

5.1 Possible Limitations and Advantages
One of possible limitations is that classroom is unreal place and situations and experiences shared in classroom may be contrary to the reality outside in the real world. Because that learning culture is broad in meaning and context, time and space may be a problem while making interactions between language and culture in an EFL environment.

Damen (1987) stated that learning culture through language in classroom may lead to two distinct advantages.

As an artificial community, the classroom is considered as a protection wall from linguistic and cultural errors that students can face outside in the real world. Classroom community is manageable, unreal, forgiving and protective, but also it is a place that provides unique opportunities for experimental intercultural communication. (Damen, 1987). There is a formidable range materials published worldwide for teachers of English as a Foreign language. However many of these materials, especially those published in English-speaking countries, assume that the teachers using them will be working with smallish classes and have abundant resources available to them. Also many, if not most, of these materials make implicit culturally-biased assumptions about the beliefs and values of the teachers and learners.